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Buchanan County Courthouse  
Courthouse Square (Jules Street between 3rd and 4th Streets)  
St. Joseph  
Buchanan County  
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1844

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BUCHANAN COUNTY COURTHOUSE

HABS No. MO-1844

Location: Courthouse Square (Jules Street between 3rd and 4th Streets), St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri

Significance: A significant local example of Renaissance Revival architecture, the Buchanan County Courthouse also served as the site of the trial of the Ford Brothers, who murdered Jesse James.

Description: The walls of the courthouse are brick, resting on a rusticated stone basement story. Window trim, columns, and decorative detail also are stone. As of 1986, these elements were unpainted, although circa 1972 they were painted white.

The building is surmounted by a glass and tin dome at the intersection of the wings. The three-stage dome rests on an octagonal base with bull's eye windows on alternate sides. Decorative tin volutes, an often-used feature in Renaissance architecture, attach the ribs of the dome to the points of the octagonal base.

History Construction of the Buchanan County Courthouse began in 1873. P.F. Meagher served as architect and John De Clue as builder. Upon completion in 1876 the building cost \$173,000. Aside from county offices, the building also contained lawyers' offices; worship rooms for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; lecture space for the Northwestern Medical College; and rooms for the Mendelssohn Society, a local music organization.

In March, 1885, fire destroyed the interior of the building, leaving only the walls and columns standing. The interior which exists today is the one built after the fire.

Source: National Register of Historic Places nomination form, compiled by M. Patricia Holmes, June 20, 1972.

Historian: Robert Buerglener, HABS, June 28, 1988

ADDENDUM TO  
BUCHANAN COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Jules Street Between Third and Fourth Streets  
Saint Joseph  
Buchanan County  
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1844

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